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ABSTRACT

Pupils should develop a thorough appreciation for poetry. Poetry may be correlated with different curriculum areas in elementary schools, such as science, math, and health. Students can be introduced to various poetic forms, such as couplets, triplets, limericks, haiku, and free verse. Teachers should encourage experimentation and novel ideas in the writing of poetry. Various teaching methods can be attempted to foster an understanding of imagery among students. Creative thinking is also an important skill which teachers must foster by providing a psychological environment in which students feel free to explore. Teachers should provide an environment which facilitates the stimulation of student thinking. Students can gain a great deal from peer group work and the sharing of ideas with each other. Learners should have ample time to engage in the writing of poetry and in creative thinking. (HB)

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THE PUPIL AND POETRY

Pupils should develop a thorough appreciation for poetry. Many words are generally used in novel and unique ways in poetry. Thus, a study of poetry should aid pupils in vocabulary development. Of utmost importance is that pupils read creative ideas and thoughts when studying poetry. Pupils can then be aided in developing their own creative ideas when writing poetry.

Poetry comes in many forms. Generally, pupils have felt that rhyming words are inherent in all poetry. However, this is not always the case. Poetry may be either rhymed or unrhymed.

Trauger1 wrote the following pertaining to objectives in the poetry curriculum:

> Maintaining children's native responsiveness and maturing their poetic understanding to keep it abreast of their chronological age are worthy long- range objectives in teaching poetry. Between the two, the balance is delicate; there is danger of strangling the former through fumbling efforts at the latter.
>
> The preservation of responsiveness is a delicate undertaking influenced by diverse factors, some deriving from the complexity of poetic art, some due to marginal circumstances which superficially might seem only slightly related to liking or disliking poetry. More than any other form of literature, poetry is sensitive to influences which prevail around the edges of a classroom lesson. The teacher believes that she is teaching one thing. She actually may be teaching it, but at the same time, because of manner, attitudes, and the classroom climate, she, unawares, teaches something
> else. That something else may either enhance or eclipse what she thought she was teaching.
>
> The project of maturing a child's understanding of poetry hinges on discovering more and more in the snug package of a poem. This becomes a great consequence in junior and senior high school years. The understanding of poetry needs to grow apace with the pupil's progress in other subjects. His understanding should be as grown up in relation to poetry as to science or social studies. If comprehension is in the young adolescent stage in those latter studies but still infantile in approaching verse, the pupil can be expected to dismiss poetry as childish or irrelevant. If maturation keeps pace with chronological age, the young person can interpret poems appropriate to his grade and in them find delight and wisdom.

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Poetry in the Elementary School Curriculum

Poetry may be correlated with different curriculum areas in elementary school. The teacher may have pupils study and write

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poetry as it relates to units of study in science, social studies, mathematics, health, as well as in other language arts areas. Poetry might also be taught as a separate unit of study. An ultimate goal for pupils to achieve is to enjoy reading and writing poetry. Poetry should not be analyzed when it destroys pupil interest in learning.

Poetry Correlated with Other Curriculum Areas

It is proper teaching procedure if pupils perceive that subject matter from diverse academic disciplines is related. For example, if pupils on the first grade level are studying a unit on the city, they might dictate content to the teacher who in return writes the resulting poem. Pupils must understand the kind of poem being emphasized in teaching-learning situations. The teacher needs to set the stage so that pupils have an inward desire in wanting to write a particular kind of poem. Using discussions, video-tapes, video-disks, pictures, filmstrips, and/or slides should provide background information for pupils in desiring to write poetry. If first grade pupils have an adequate writing vocabulary, they may write their own poem. An interesting kind of poem for pupils to write is a couplet. Couplets contain two lines of verse. The two lines are somewhat uniform in length with ending words rhyming. The following are examples of couplets.

1. The city is filled with people
   And the church has a tall steeple.
2. The sidewalk is broad and wide
   The boy rides a bicycle on the side.
3. The children play in the house
   Where there is no mouse.

If pupils are studying an elementary school science unit on magnetism and electricity, the following couplet may be developed by pupils individually or in committees:

We made some magnets in the room
Then we cleaned the room with a broom.

Pupils individually or cooperatively may also write triplets. Thus, three lines are to be written with ending words rhyming. The three lines should be somewhat uniform in length. Again, the stage must be set for pupils so that an inward desire exists to write poetry. A stimulating environment must be present to aid pupils in developing background information for the writing of poetry. The following is an example of a triplet as it relates to and integrates with a specific social studies unit entitled "Westward Movement."

The forty niners went to the West
To look for gold with great zest
Hoping to gain much wealth at best.

Pupils may wish to write free verse with teacher guidance. No rhyming of words is required in the writing of free verse. In the writing of free verse, there are no standards pertaining to the

length of each line and for the entire poem. A writing center in the class setting could contain selected pictures pertaining to an ongoing unit of study. The pictures, of course, need not necessarily relate to an ongoing teaching or resource unit. Learners may choose and write about a picture. The written content could pertain to free verse. The following is free verse as it relates to a picture on farm animals:

The cow
can be a beautiful animal.
provides us with milk and cream.
eats grain and hay eagerly.
may also provide a good supply of meat.
is interested in the pipeline milker.
misses her calf much.
does not get along well with pigs.
is eagerly waiting for the long winter to
end and have summer arrive.
likes to roam in the shed with other cows.
does not like the big dog in the yard.
would rather be in a warm shed as compared to
the cold outdoors.

Each pupil needs to determine the length of his or her free verse. Pupils should be creative in thinking of unique ideas in writing any type of poem.

There are definite advantages in having pupils write free verse. Learners are not restricted in using rhyming words. Uniformity in length of lines also is not a restriction. The writing of free verse can be related to many unit titles in diverse curriculum areas. If pupils are studying a science unit on prehistoric life, the following free verse could be written by a child individually or in a small group:

The Tyrannosaurus Rex dinosaur
ate many other kinds of dinosaurs.
had serrated teeth.
was the king of dinosaurs.
was ferocious.
was taller than other dinosaurs.
lived during the Mesozoic era.
might have been cold-blooded like fish and turtles
are today.

Limericks are an enjoyable type of poetry for pupils to read and write. Limericks consist of a couplet and a triplet. The first, second, and fifth lines in a limerick make a triplet. The third and fourth lines comprise a couplet. It is important for pupils to understand and attach meaning to a couplet and triplet before limericks are introduced. From an anthology of children's literature, the teacher may read limericks to children. These limericks must be chosen carefully to capture interests of listeners. Enjoyment of poetry is of untmost importance! The selected limericks must be on the understanding level of children. Learners with teacher guidance could select which limericks they like best. These may be written on the chalkboard or on a

transparency. Pupils inductively need to arrive at meaningful generalizations pertaining to what ingredients are necessary in the writing of limericks. Thus, learners may write their own limericks once the inherent pattern is understood. The following limerick pertains to a unit on magnetism and electricity:

There once was a man called Thomas Edison
Who invented a bulb which gave a bright light in
the long run
He liked to invent things
From which the world benefits and sings
And made life easier, more enjoyable, and much more
fun.

Haiku poetry can also be enjoyable for pupils to write. Rhyming words are not necessary in haiku poetry. Pupils, however, do need to be able to divide words into syllables when writing haiku poetry. The first line of a haiku poem has five syllables. The second line has seven syllables, followed by five syllables in the third line. Haiku poetry may discuss nature. The following haiku poem might be written by observing rain falling in the outdoors:

The rain pattering
on the window with great speed
swish, slosh, swoosh, slash, spash.

Pupils need to be praised and encouraged to present novel ideas in writing poetry. Pupils should be encouraged to invent new words. The last line of the previously written haiku poem has unique words which give sounds made by drops of rain. Onomatopoeia is a term given to words which make sounds similar to those in the natural environment. Alliteration is also prevalent in the last line of the haiku poem in that the beginning sound of each word is the same. Numerous poets use alliteration as a poetic device in the writing of poetry.

Pertaining to writing haiku poetry, Heilman, Blair, and Rupley2 wrote the following:

> You can use language experience activities to compose poems individually or in a group. An excellent poetry form for introducing such activities is haiku. Colorful pictorial materials, such as paintings, photographs, and drawings can stimulate children to form the word pictures for haiku. Haiku is a seventeen-syllable pattern in three lines, with five syllables in the first and third lines and seven in the second line.
>
> For example, a picture of a dancing bear inspired Sally to dictate the following to her teacher, who assisted her with identifying words to fit the haiku pattern (this assistance is important and you can help the children identify words by discussing features of the picture with them and offering word possibilities.)
>
> The brown dancing bear,

Dancing around in his cage,
Dancing on his toes.

Imagery in Poetry

It is important for pupils to understand imagery in the writing of poetry. Thus, pupils may understand meaningful concepts and generalizations pertaining to metaphors and similes. This can be achieved utilizing approaches such as the following:

1. reading poetry containing metaphors and similes to pupils.
2. discussing with pupils meanings of metaphors and similes.
3. developing poems with learners that contain metaphors and similes.
4. having pupils find and read poems that contain metaphors and similes.
5. having pupils individually or in committees write poetry which contains metaphors and similes.

Wolfe3 wrote the following pertaining to pupils developing sequential learnings in imagery:

Children can make comparisons, too; once set in motion in an expectant classroom, their originality astonishes both them and us. Perhaps they have already described boys and girls in the class. One girl, like Jane, has golden hair; a boy, like Will, has blur eyes; still another pupil has brown eyes or black hair.

We may put some comparisons on the board for completion, naming pupils our class has described:

1. Joe's eyes are as blue as _____.
2. Fred's eyes are as brown as _____.
3. Fran's dress is as green as _____.

From these we may go on to other comparisons to be completed:

4. The house was as dark as _____.
5. His face was as red as _____.
6. The wind made a noise like _____.
7. Jimmy stood as still as _____.

In a later lesson we may begin with several comparisons like this:

As soft as a kitten's paw
As soft as a feather
As soft as a pillow

Pupils with teacher guidance might then write lines of verse containing imagery such as in the following examples:

1. The rain sounded like fairies dancing on the

window sill.
2. The train roared like a giant in the sky.
3. The wind blew like a sneezing ogre.

In each of these lines of poetry, similes are used. Something is sompared to something else joined by the word "like." In sentence number one, for example, the sound of "rain" is ocmpared to the sound of "fairies dancing on the window sill." In sentence number two "The train roared" is
compared to "a giant in the sky," while in sentence three "The wind blew" is being contrasted with "a sneezing ogre."
The word "as" is also used in imagery. He came as a thief in the night.

In the case of metaphors, the words "like" and "as" are not used in making creative comparisons. Notice the use of metaphors in the following lines of verse:

1. The cat, a swirling mass of colors, runs in the yard.
2. The dog, clawing feverishly in the garden, finally found a bone.
3. The clouds were fluffy pillows racing across the sky.
4. The house appeared to float on fairies' wings in the sky.

Otherwise similes and metaphors have similar functions in making creative comparisons. Karlin and Karlin4 wrote:

> Poetry is replete with figurative language. Teachers might read poems that contain metaphors and similes to illustrate how words can be used to create vivid images with special meanings:

Winter and Summer

The winter
is an ice-cream treat,
all frosty white and cold to eat.
But summer
is a lemonade
of yellow sun and straw-cool shade.

--Myra Cohn Livingston

Creative Writing and the Pupil

Creative thinking is an important skill and attitude for all learners to develop in greater depth as they progress through the school years. In everyday living, it is important to think creatively so that one's own problems
may be solved. Too frequently, solutions that have worked for others in the solving of problems may not work for us. Unique solutions in many cases are then needed to solve problems. Progress in society and the world has come about due to individuals

having been creative. Thus, progress in medicine, manufacturing, dentistry, education, agriculture, and other facets of life, has come about through creative efforts of individuals and groups. It is of utmost importance for students to engage in creative thinking.

Donoghue5 described creative behavior in the following paragraph:

> ...approaches learning situations in unstandardized ways and appears offbeat or inferior at times in his thinking. He is not highly success-oriented. What he is, however, is curious, original, self- directing, sensitive, secure, flexible, persistent, humorous, and productive. He needs to meet challenge and to attempt difficult...tasks just as he needs to give himself completely to a task and to become fully absorbed in it.

The teacher must provide a psychological environment whereby students feel free to explore and experiment. Learners need to feel relaxed in the class setting to think of ideas which are different and unique. Thus, a student can present a contribution which is novel based on previously acquired learnings. It is difficult to come up with ideas which are unique for all learners in a class. However, it is possible for a pupil to come up with original content on an individual basis. Lundsteen6 wrote:

> Although writing is an important activity, many children and adults do not like to write, finding it mentally and physically difficult. There are many possible reasons for the dislike, but a few seem worth mentioning here. First, if young children have not had many prior experiences with the printed word, they may not grasp the purpose for writing. Engaging in a writing activity simply because the teacher says so or assigns a specific writing task, as in the old days, may seem senseless to the child. Second, children may have developmental and skill limitations to overcome. Holding a pencil tires youngsters, and while they may have something exciting to say, their hands may go too slowly and fatigue too quickly for the important thought to be written down. Children may lack the spelling vocabulary (lexicon) they need in order to write.
>
> Although young children are comfortable scribbling and inventing spellings, older children quickly learn that correct spelling is important, particularly to the teacher. Children may worry about misspelled words and mechanical errors; consequently, writing becomes a risky business. Finally, children may not like to write because they do not feel their writing will be valued. Putting words on paper leaves a highly visible trail of what children think or feel; writing is an extension of children themselves. If children do not feel good about themselves, if they are afraid of rejection from their teacher and peers, they may

be afraid to expose themselves to others. Feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability may lead children to dislike writing.

Pupils with teacher guidance need to plan a rich learning environment. Students must have experiences which stimulate creative thinking. Stimulating bulletin boards, learning centers, reading materials, and audio-visual aids encourage in setting the stage for creative endeavors. Students will then acquire subject matter which might be utilized to write a creative story, poem, essay, letter or other form of written work. The teacher must think of learning activities which will stimulate creative thinking.

Too frequently, the teacher has assessed student progress in writing based on spelling words correctly, demonstrated neat handwriting, using punctuation marks
properly, and using capital letters correctly. Very little emphasis may have been placed upon ideas that students have expressed. To be sure, students need to make continuous progress in correct spelling of words, legible handwriting, correct punctuation, and proper capitalization of letters. Students may reveal their achievement in the mechanics of writing when they proofread their final written product. At the timed ideas are written on paper, students may not be able to concentrate on the mechanics of writing. Donoghue7 wrote:

Factors identified as the most inhibitive to creative expression include: (1) tests based on detailed memorization; (2) discouragement of fantasy and imagination; (3) stereotyped sex roles; and (4) social expectation, including peer censure.

The teacher must give careful consideration to praising students for being creative. Most students like praise for work that reveals improved performance. If creative products are praised by the teacher, students generally will feel that creativity is what is wanted and desired. If the teacher criticizes students' creative behavior, learners might feel that this is not an approved way of approaching learning activities. A smile of approval , saying "that's tremendous," or "that's terrific," among other means, can certanly stimulate students in desiring to express content creatively.

There needs to be time set aside whereby students can share completed work. Students individually may perceive how content differs between and among finished products.
When sharing thoughts, students learn from each other pertaining to ways of expressing unique ideas as well as creativity contained in ideas in and of themselves. They may learn about new vocabulary terms which can be used in writing wa well as creative ways in which these terms can be used. Students may also learn about inventing words to use in writing.

The teacher certainly needs to be well acquainted with characteristics of students revealing creative behavior. There are teachers who have confused creative behavior of students with misbehavior. That is most unfortunate! Teacher then should become well versed in approaches to (a) setting the stage for learners to

exhibit creative behavior, (b) rewarding creative behavior of students, and (c) being highly knowledgeable about characteristics of individuals who are creative. Green and Petty8 wrote the following:

Poetry is (or should be) a vital part of the literature program, yet too often it is neglected or poorly taught in today's schools. Some teachers simply do not know how to present poetry to children; others feel it has little place in the modern science-oriented world; a few, unfortunately, spoil children's appreciation by poor reading of prolonged analysis of form and style. Yet children love rhythm, rhyme, and the sounds of words.

In Summary

The teacher must set the stage to have pupils develop feelings of desiring to express ideas creatively. A variety of rich learning experiences can aid pupils in creative thinking and creative writing. These experiences must be challenging and interesting. PUpils can then be encouraged to participate in a wide variety of creative activities.

Learners should have ample opportunities to engage in the writing of poetry. Learners may then write couplets, triplets, free verse, limericks, and haiku poetry. Pupils' ideas in creative writing need to be accepted and respected by the teacher as well as by learners.

Pertaining to creative teaching, Chenfield9 wrote:

> Imagine you are in a vast convention hall filled with an immense display of the latest, brightest, and best educational materials: film strips, tapes, videos, computers, cassettes, movies, magazines, workbooks, photographs, craft kits, cutouts, stencils, and textbooks. Except for these items spread in colorful array, the room is empty. Until one human being enters the scene, walks, stops, looks, and touches, all the materials are nothing but inert matter, just as the magician's props are nothing but objects until used by the individual who can change them into something wonderful.
>
> Creative teachers transform ordinary learning into magical moments. They translate routine lesson plans into memorable experiences. They present facts in such original ways that the information fuses with other, deeper understandings and results in exciting discoveries for students.

Questions to Consider

1. In your own thinking, how can the teacher provide a rich learning environment for pupils which encourages creative thinking and writing?

2. Which criteria should the teacher follow when assessing creative written products of pupils?

3. Observe several teaching-learning situations pertaining to creative writing:
   (a) How did they aid pupils to think and to write creatively?
   (b) What hindrances were there for learners' motivation to participate in creative endeavors?

4. Talk to several elementary school principals pertaining to teachers emphasizing creative writing in the class setting. What suggestions do these principals have to encourage creative behavior among pupils?

5. Consult several curriculum guides pertaining to learning activities for pupils in creative writing.
   (a) Evaluate these learning activities in terms of pupils achieving desirable objectives in creative writing.
   (b) Do these learning activities make adequate provision for individual differences? Why or why not?
   (c) Would these activities, do you think, stimulate pupils in having an inward desire to write creatively?

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